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ARGENTINA

President Maria Estela Peron has stifled legislative criticism of her administration by abruptly terminating a special session of congress. This will seriously damage the chances of continued cooperation between the government and major opposition parties.

Mrs. Peron attempted to justify her action by claiming that the most important work on the budget and related fiscal matters has already been completed. This explanation failed to satisfy her critics, especially opposition Radicals, who had intended to debate controversial executive actions such as the imposition of the state of siege and recent federal take-overs of state provincial governments.

Since the death of her husband, President Peron has met only twice with opposition leaders in carefully arranged sessions that did not allow for discussion. In addition, the government recently demonstrated its hostility to freedom of expression by shutting down several newspapers.

When the next session of congress convenes on May 1, opposition leaders may abandon the conciliatory posture they have maintained thus far. Although leading Radical spokesman Ricardo Balbin has sought to continue the "political dialogue" begun by Juan Peron, he will be under pressure from the left wing of his party to take a harder line toward Mrs. Peron, particularly if terrorism--on which the entire party supports her--ceases to be the major focus of attention. [redacted] 3.5(c)

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